

Eastern Loudoun Sheriff's Substation Special Exception Application



Statement of Justification

The Sheriff's Office is formally requesting Special Exception approval to allow the establishment of a Sheriff's Substation on property adjoining the Rolling Ridge Elementary School at 500 E. Frederick Drive in Sterling. The property was formerly owned by the Loudoun County School Board and consisted of 18.49 acres. The School Board, at its meeting on May 8, 2007, voted to declare four (4) acres of this property as surplus and transferred ownership of this parcel to the County for the purpose of constructing a Sheriff's substation. The property is located within the Sterling Election District and is identified on Loudoun County Tax Map /81/36////B/, PIN # 014452790.

It is important to note that this property is bounded by the elementary school to the east and a public park to the west. There is a significant buffer of trees and a creek that separate the property from the residential area to the north and East Frederick Drive separates it from the residential area to the south. Coupled with the Sheriff's Office desire to be a good neighbor through non-intrusive lighting and noise considerations, there should be little or no impact on nearby residents.

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Funding for a joint Sheriff/Fire & Rescue Station was approved by voter referendum in November, 2002. In 2006, after years of unsuccessful efforts to locate a suitable site for this facility, the Loudoun County School Board generously offered to transfer a small portion of the Rolling Ridge property following the school administration's stated desire to co-locate with the Sheriff's Office. In FY07, the Board of Supervisors reallocated design funds to the Eastern Sheriff's Substation project and construction funding is proposed using general obligation bond financing scheduled for the November 2007 Referendum.

A review of this site determined that it is well situated for a Sheriff's Substation. It provides easy access to major transportation routes in the area including Sterling Boulevard, Church Road, and Leesburg Pike. The location is nearly in the center of the Sheriff's Office eastern service area, defined by patrol sectors that were designed through study of calls for service patterns and geographic features. These patrol sectors include the areas of Sterling, Sugarland Run, Cascades and Countryside, generally encompassing all of the areas east of Rt. 28. The central location of this site will not only provide efficiencies for the Sheriff's Office but will also make it convenient to the population it will serve to access services or to utilize the planned community room.

The Sterling area is the most densely populated area of the county and contains a diverse population. Language barriers and cultural differences create significant challenges for the Sheriff's Office. The patrol sectors that comprise the service area have the highest number of calls for service compared to the other sheriff's patrol districts; in 2006, the Sterling patrol sectors averaged over 5000 calls for service per month. Unfortunately, there were also a number of serious incidents including drive-by shootings, gang-related stabbings, a triple shooting in October and a double shooting in November. A strong law enforcement presence in the community is needed that will strengthen the sheriff-community partnership and enhance crime reduction efforts.

The proposed substation is envisioned to be an 18,000-square-foot facility that will provide substantial public safety services to the community including patrol, crime prevention, and traffic enforcement. The facility will house staff offices, a community room, deputy work rooms and temporary detention facilities. The Sheriff's Office will provide coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week under the command of a Sheriff's Captain. Having operations and support capabilities locally will also reduce the need for deputies to travel to the Sheriff's Office Headquarters in Leesburg, thereby keeping them in the neighborhoods. Incorporating a community meeting room will also provide a venue for community meetings that will be easily accessible to residents and community groups.

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A community input session was held on November 1, 2006, at the Rolling Ridge Elementary School which was attended by approximately 70 citizens. Although there were some concerns raised, most of those in attendance desired to have a substation in the community. At the School Board meeting on January 9, 2007, a single speaker appeared at the public hearing. Following her strongly supportive comments in favor of the substation, the School Board voted unanimously to proceed with a subdivision waiver that would lead to turning the parcel over to the County. On January 29, 2007, another public meeting was held at Rolling Ridge Elementary. Again, support for the project was voiced and creation of a citizen advisory group was announced. The advisory group has since been established and consists of nine members to participate in the design process.

The proposed Sheriff's Substation is in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and with the adopted standard of one substation for each 75,000 population. It also meets the county's stated objective of co-locating public facilities when possible. Finally, it advances the objective of making services more readily available to citizens through decentralization of Sheriff's Office operations.

Issues for Consideration:

In accordance with Section 6-1310 of the 1993 Zoning Ordinance, the following response to the listed issues for consideration is offered:

(A) Whether the proposed special exception is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The proposed development is consistent with the comprehensive plan. Chapter 3: Fiscal Planning and Public Facilities, Section D: Law Enforcement of the General Plan acknowledges that the siting of new facilities is critical to the County's efforts to successfully provide services in a dynamically changing, growth environment. Additionally, this project supports the county's objective of co-locating public facilities when feasible, meets the adopted standard of one substation per 75,000 population and is in accordance with the county's objective of decentralizing services for improved public access and convenience.

(B) Whether the proposed special exception will adequately provide for safety from fire hazards and have effective measures of fire control.

The facility would be constructed in full conformance with applicable building codes to ensure the safety of its users.

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- (C) **Whether the level of impact of any noise emanating from the site, including that generated by the proposed use negatively impacts the uses in the immediate area.**

The new facility will be compatible with surrounding uses. Vehicle emergency equipment would not be tested on premises. Because deputies are deployed in a sector system, it would be unusual to have an emergency response initiated from the substation.

- (D) **Whether the glare or light that may be generated by the proposed use negatively impacts the uses in the immediate area.**

The lighting for the facilities will be designed in accordance with applicable ordinances of Loudoun County and will be of non-intrusive design.

- (E) **Whether the proposed use is compatible with other existing or proposed uses in the neighborhood, and adjacent parcels.**

The Sheriff's Office is of the opinion that the use would not only be compatible but may enhance the use of other properties. Through a law enforcement presence coupled with a strong community policing focus, an enhanced sense of security will likely be experienced and crime diminished. The Sheriff's Office is firmly committed to "good neighbor" practices through careful planning of facilities and thoughtful conduct of substation activities.

- (F) **Whether sufficient existing or proposed landscaping, screening and buffering on the site to adequately screen surrounding uses.**

Please refer to exhibits we have provided as part of this application which address existing natural buffering to the north and west and other proposed buffering to adequately screen surrounding uses.

- (G) **Whether the proposed special exception will result in the preservation of any topographic or physical, natural, scenic, archaeological or historic feature of significant importance.**

This item is not applicable to the parcel. The parcel does not contain scenic, archaeological or historical features and the topographical, physical and natural features are being preserved to the best extent possible.

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(H) Whether the proposed special exception will damage existing animal habitat, vegetation, water quality (including ground water) or air quality.

Like all new County construction projects, the site plan design for this parcel will be especially considerate to minimize environmental impacts. The major portion of this parcel is an open field created as open space. The parameters of construction have been designed to primarily use the existing open space that does not contain animal habitat or vegetation other than mown grass. Water quality will be handled through low impact development BMP's to protect ground water as well as storm water shedding to the adjacent creek. The use of this property does not create an adverse air quality situation.

(I) Whether the proposed special exception at the specified location will contribute or promote the welfare or convenience of the public.

Siting a substation in the Sterling area will substantially increase the public's access to law enforcement services that are now only available in Leesburg, such as obtaining copies of accident reports, warrant verification and service, etc. It will also provide ready access of senior command of the Sheriff's Office for issue resolution, implementation of specifically targeted programs and an expansion of community policing. The planned community room will not only serve as a venue that will enhance the public/community partnership, but will also provide a centrally located site for community groups to meet.

(J) Whether the traffic expected to be generated by the proposed use will be served adequately by roads, pedestrian connections, and other transportation services.

Deputies are deployed in shifts that are timed to provide maximum coverage at peak periods and to have shift changes occur at non-peak times. The planned facility is located adjacent to major transportation corridors in the area and would not substantially increase peak hour traffic on any of the on-site roads and adjacent roads. The pedestrian circulation system is adequate and compatible with our use.

(K) Whether, in case of existing structures to be converted to uses requiring a special exception, the structures meet all code requirements of Loudoun County

N/A This facility will be new construction.

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- (L) **Whether the proposed special exception will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services.**
The facility will have all required public facilities and services for proper operation.
- (M) **The effect of the proposed special exception on groundwater supply**
This parcel will be served by public water provided by the Loudoun County Sanitation Authority.
- (N) **The effect of the proposed special exception on the structural capacity of the soils.**
Facilities will be designed in accordance with all ordinance requirements with detailed attention to those referring to grading and alteration of current conditions.
- (O) **Whether the proposed use will facilitate orderly and safe road development and transportation.**
The existing road network will support the additional traffic. With a stronger law enforcement presence, deputies will provide increased visibility and improved compliance with traffic laws in the area.
- (P) **Whether the proposed special exception use will provide desirable employment and enlarge the tax base by encouraging economic development activities consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.**
Although the Sterling area already has strong commercial presence, the addition of the substation will provide an enhanced sense of security that will encourage economic development.
- (Q) **Whether the proposed special exception considers the need of agriculture, industry, and businesses in future growth.**
The addition of the substation will provide an enhanced sense of security that will enhance the business climate.
- (R) **The location of any existing and/or proposed adequate on and off-site infrastructure**
Please refer to the special exception plat for details.
- (S) **Any anticipated odors which may be generated by the uses on site**
No odors are anticipated as the result of the planned facility.

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- (T) **Whether the proposed special exception uses sufficient measure to mitigate the impact of construction traffic on existing neighborhoods and school areas.**

During the approximate one year construction period the parcel will be fully fenced with a VDOT approved ingress/egress point. Additional measures will be in place to mitigate high traffic at critical times with the adjoining school. These particular measures will be set with further discussions with the principal, local deputies, school safety personnel and public meetings. Enforcement will be the responsibility of the County.

Summary

Increasing calls for law enforcement services as well as incidences of gang activity and violent crime are significant concerns for citizens in eastern Loudoun. Locating a Sheriff's substation in Sterling is expected to provide substantial public safety services to the community, reduce out-of-sector time by reducing deputy trips to Leesburg and provide a community meeting venue for residents and community groups. It will also provide a strong law enforcement presence in the most densely populated and diverse area of the county and will serve to strengthen the sheriff-community partnership and expand the community policing program.

The Sheriff's Office requests your favorable consideration for approval of the special exception application to construct a substation at the East Frederick Drive site.

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